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DEPARTMENT FOR PM, BCLTV, EAP, CB

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SUBJECT: COMMANDER, SPECIAL OPERATION COMMAND
PACIFIC'S MEETINGS WITH CO-DEFENSE MINISTERS AND
GENERAL STAFF.

1. SUMMARY. ON MAY 3, 1997, VISITING MAJOR GENERAL CHARLES HOLLAND, COMMANDER, SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND PACIFIC, HAD SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CO-MINISTERS OF NATIONAL DEFENSE AND THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF, LTG MEAS SOPHEA, REAFFIRMING THE MILITARY-TO-MILITARY RELATIONSHIP AND EMPHASIZING U.S. CONCERNS ABOUT THE NEUTRALITY AND PROFESSIONAL ROLE OF THE CAMBODIAN MILITARY IN THE WAKE OF RECENT POLITICAL TENSIONS. THE CO-MINISTERS OF NATIONAL DEFENSE EXPRESSED THE STRONG DESIRE OF THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP TO KEEP THE MILITARY NEUTRAL, RECOUNTED THE IMPORTANCE OF U.S. MILITARY SUPPORT AND TRAINING AND PLEDGED TO CONTINUE COOPERATION ON FORCE PROTECTION ISSUES. LTG MEAS SOPHEA, THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF, EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR U.S. MILITARY SUPPORT, AND NOTED THE IMPORTANCE OF FORCE PROTECTION TO THE RCAF. LTG MEAS SOPHEA RECOUNTED EFFORTS TO KEEP THE MILITARY NEUTRAL AND NOTED THAT THE POLITICIANS SHOULD SETTLE THEIR DIFFERENCES PEACEFULLY. LTG MEAS SOPHEA SAID THAT EVEN THOUGH THE HARD-LINE KHMER ROUGE PROBLEM HAD BEEN AFFECTED NEGATIVELY BY POLITICAL TENSIONS, THE KHMER ROUGE PROBLEM WOULD END BY NEXT YEAR.

--MEETING WITH CO-MINISTERS OF NATIONAL DEFENSE--

2. ON MAY 3, 1997, MAJ GEN CHARLES HOLLAND, COMMANDER, SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND PACIFIC, ACCOMPANIED BY THE DEFENSE ATTACHE, MET WITH CO-MINISTERS OF NATIONAL DEFENSE ((TEA)) BANH (CPP) AND ((TEA)) CHAMRATH (FUNCINPEC). AFTER AN EXCHANGE OF GREETINGS, MAJ GEN HOLLAND RECOUNTED HIS EARLIER DISCUSSIONS THE PREVIOUS EVENING AT THE DATT'S RESIDENCE WITH EK SEREYWATH, THE STATE SECRETARY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE. MAJ GEN HOLLAND NOTED IT WAS MOST ENCOURAGING THAT EK SEREYWATH STATED THAT 'THE CONFRONTATION' WOULD BE RESOLVED PEACEFULLY. MAJ GEN HOLLAND SAID HE WOULD CARRY THESE COMMENTS BACK TO USCINCPAC AND EMPHASIZED THAT IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE CONTINUED BI-LATERAL RELATIONSHIP THAT POLITICAL DIFFERENCES BE RESOLVED PEACEFULLY AND WITHOUT THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE MILITARY.

3. MAJ GEN HOLLAND SAID THAT USCINCPAC INITIATIVES IN CAMBODIA OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS HAD BEEN BENEFICIAL FOR BOTH THE RCAF AND U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL DEPLOYED FOR DEMINING, MEDICAL AND ENGINEERING TRAINING AND EXERCISES. MAJ GEN HOLLAND EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE CAMBODIAN MILITARY'S POSITIVE ASSISTANCE WITH FORCE PROTECTION WHICH WAS A CONTINUING CONCERN FOR USCINCPAC. HE NOTED THAT ONE FORCE PROTECTION INCIDENT INVOLVING U.S. FORCES WOULD RESULT IN A SERIOUS REEVALUATION OF CONTINUED DEPLOYMENTS TO CAMBODIA AND URGED CONTINUED CLOSE COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE ON THIS ISSUE. HE SAID THAT SOCPAC AND DEPLOYED SPECIAL FORCES PERSONNEL

FELT GOOD ABOUT THE SUPPORT AND COOPERATION WITH THE RCAF AND THAT SOCPAC WOULD PROVIDE AS MUCH SUPPORT AS POSSIBLE TO CONTINUE DEVELOPING RCAF SKILLS AND PROFESSIONALISM.

¶4. CO-MINISTER TEA CHAMRATH EXPRESSED HIS THANKS TO USCINCPAC FOR THE CONTINUING ASSISTANCE, AND ESPECIALLY FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS TRAINING COURSES IN THE UNITED STATES (UNDER IMET). HE NOTED THAT THE LAST TWO YEARS OF ASSISTANCE IN DEMINING, HEALTH, AND ENGINEERING TRAINING, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO THE KHMER ROUGE DEFECTOR PROGRAM HAD BEEN OF GREAT ASSISTANCE TO THE GOVERNMENT AND RCAF. REGARDING THE REMAINING HARD-LINE KHMER ROUGE AT ANLONG VENG, TEA CHAMRATH STATED THAT TA MOK AND POL POT WERE A SMALL PROBLEM WHICH WOULD BE RESOLVED PEACEFULLY. HE SAID THAT HE AND TEA BANH VERY MUCH APPRECIATED THAT USCINCPAC REMAINED INTERESTED AND COMMITTED TO ASSIST CAMBODIA, NOTING THAT THEY COULD ALWAYS USE MORE ASSISTANCE.

¶5. REFERRING TO FORCE PROTECTION, BOTH CO-MINISTERS STATED THAT SECURITY OF U.S. PERSONNEL WAS ALSO THEIR CONCERN, AND THEY WERE GRATEFUL THAT THE U.S. PERSONNEL WERE SO WELL-DISCIPLINED AND GOOD REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES. TEA BANH CONCLUDED BY EXPRESSING THANKS FOR THE MEDICAL AND ENGINEERING SUPPORT AT THE CHAMKAR BEI EX-KHMER ROUGE RESETTLEMENT CENTER AT PHNOM VOAR IN KAMPOT PROVINCE AND SAID THE COOPERATION WITH THE U.S. MILITARY WAS AN EXCEPTIONAL OPPORTUNITY TO WORK TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE GOOD WORKS FOR THE CAMBODIAN PEOPLE.

--MEETING AT THE GENERAL STAFF--

¶6. EARLIER ON 3 MAY LTG MEAS SOPHEA (CPP), THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, MET MAJ GEN HOLLAND ON BEHALF OF LTG KE KIM YAN, THE CHIEF OF STAFF WHO WAS OUT OF TOWN. MAJ GEN HOLLAND EXPRESSED GREETING FROM ADMIRAL PRUEHER, CINCPAC, AND EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE COOPERATION AND SUPPORT FROM THE RCAF DURING U.S. TRAINING DEPLOYMENTS AND EMPHASIZED THE CONCERNS ABOUT FORCE PROTECTION FOR U.S. FORCES TRAINING IN CAMBODIA. MAJ GEN HOLLAND ALSO EXPRESSED CONGRATULATIONS ON THE PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATION BY THE CAMBODIAN PARTICIPANTS IN THE 1997 PACIFIC AREA ARMIES MANAGEMENT SEMINAR IN HAWAII THE PREVIOUS MONTHS, NOTHING THAT MAJ GEN KHEM SOPHOAN'S PRESENTATION ON THE RCAF WAS VERY WELL RECEIVED BY THE CONFERENCE. RECOUNTING USCINCPAC/SOCPAC HUMANITARIAN DEMINING SUPPORT, MAJ GEN HOLLAND SAID THE SUCCESS OF THIS PROGRAM WAS AN IMPORTANT BENCHMARK OF THE USG'S AND USCINCPAC'S SUCCESS IN SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT AND THE RCAF AND HOPED THIS SUCCESS WOULD CONTINUE. LTG MEAS SAID FORCE PROTECTION OF U.S. PERSONNEL WOULD CONTINUE TO BE AN IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR THE RCAF WHO ENJOYED THE BENEFITS OF U.S. MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS.

¶6. MAJ GEN HOLLAND NOTED THAT WHILE USCINCPAC HAD PROVIDED A LOT OF SUPPORT AND TRAINING TO THE RCAF, WASHINGTON WOULD REACT VERY NEGATIVELY TO THE RCAF'S PARTICIPATION IN VIOLENCE. LTG MEAS SOPHEA ACKNOWLEDGED THE RECENT POLITICAL TENSIONS AND SAID FORTUNATELY THAT THERE HAD ONLY BEEN FIGHTING WITH WORDS AND NOT WEAPONS. HE STATED THAT POLITICAL TENSIONS HAD NEGATIVELY AFFECTED DRY SEASON OPERATIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE HARD-LINE KHMER ROUGE AT ANLONG VENG, AS WELL AS THE INVESTMENT CLIMATE IN CAMBODIA. LTG MEAS STATED THAT WHILE THE RCAF HAD DECLARED NEUTRALITY AND HAD TAKEN STEPS INSURE THE TROOPS REMAIN UNDER CONTROL, IT WAS UP TO THE POLITICIANS TO LIMIT THEIR FIGHTS TO RADIO AND TELEVISION WITH NO WEAPONS. HE ADMITTED THAT, UNFORTUNATELY, SOME SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS WERE STILL INFLUENCED STRONGLY BY THE POLITICAL

LEADERSHIP. HE SAID THE TWO POLITICAL PARTIES MUST SOLVE THE ISSUES BETWEEN PEACEFULLY NOTING THAT CAMBODIA WAS STILL A VERY YOUNG DEMOCRACY WITH MANY PROBLEMS WHICH COULD ONLY BE RESOLVED STEP BY STEP.

17. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SECURITY SITUATION AND STATE OF THE RCAF, LTG MEAS SOPHEA SAID THAT SINCE AUGUST 1996, 90 PERCENT OF THE KHMER ROUGE HAD JOINED THE GOVERNMENT AND THERE WAS PEACE. AT REMAINING KHMER ROUGE ENCLAVE AT ANLONG VENG THERE WERE ONLY BETWEEN 1000-2000 FIGHTERS AND THAT THE KHMER ROUGE RANK AND FILE WANTED TO STOP FIGHTING. HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD HAD LITTLE SUCCESS IN NEGOTIATING WITH POL POT AND TA MOK, BUT HAD CONVINCED MANY FRONT LINE KHMER ROUGE SOLDIERS TO DEFECT. HE SAID THE RCAF'S STRATEGY WAS TO PROCEED STEP BY STEP, AVOID FIGHTING AND SLOWLY WEAKEN THE KHMER ROUGE THROUGH AN ATTRITION OF DEFECTORS. HE SAID THE KHMER ROUGE WERE LOGISTICALLY WEAKENED AND THAT SPIRIT DE CORPS AND MORALE AMONG THE RANK AND FILE WAS VERY LOW. VILLAGES NO LONGER SUPPORTED THE KHMER ROUGE AND THAT THE KR HAD RESORTED TO TERROR TACTICS AGAINST THE POPULACE TO PREVENT DEFECTIONS. HE SAID THAT THE KHMER ROUGE PROBLEM WOULD END BY NEXT YEAR.

18. COMMENTS. MAJ GEN HOLLAND'S VISIT FURTHER ENHANCED THE GROWING BI-LATERAL MILITARY RELATIONSHIP AND PROVIDED ANOTHER RECENT OPPORTUNITY FOR A SENIOR U.S. MILITARY OFFICER TO EXPRESS SERIOUS CONCERN ABOUT THE PROPER ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN A DEMOCRACY. MAJ GEN HOLLAND'S COMMENTS WERE WELL-RECEIVED FROM THE CO-MINISTERS AND LTG MEAS SOPHEA, ALL OF WHOM UNDERSTAND THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTING POLITICAL TENSIONS FROM ERUPTING INTO VIOLENCE. MAJ GEN HOLLAND'S VISIT FOLLOWS THE MID-APRIL VISIT OF MAJOR GENERAL STEPHEN SILVASY, THE DEPUTY COMMANDER, U.S. ARMY PACIFIC, WHO ALSO DELIVERED A STRONG AND CLEAR MESSAGE OF HOW RCAF INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICAL VIOLENCE WOULD BE VIEWED BY THE USG. THE LEADERSHIP OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND THE GENERAL STAFF CLEARLY UNDERSTAND THE GREAT COSTS, BOTH PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY TO THEMSELVES, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY TO THE CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF THE RCAF AND CAMBODIA, SHOULD THE TENSIONS ERUPT INTO EXTRA-LEGAL VIOLENCE. EMBASSY IS VERY APPRECIATIVE OF BOTH VISITS BY PACOM SENIOR OFFICERS, WHOSE WORDS WERE RIGHT ON TARGET WITH OUR TARGET AUDIENCE.

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